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RECENT INFORMATION FROM EAST TIMOR

Translation of excerpts of a personal letter dated February 20.,1986 addressed to Mgr. Martinho da Costa Lopes, Apostolic Administrator (Acting Bishop) of the Roman Catholic Church of East Timor (1977-83).

Mainly in the areas of Lospalos, Baucau, Viqueque, Manatuto, Same, Ainaro and Bobonaro the actions of our guerillas have been taking place most intensely in the months January, March, April, November and December of 1985, causing the invader many dead and wounded and capturing many modern arms. At the present moment the resistance forces continue to control the greater part of the territory, staying close to the villages and concentration camps. Some of the guerillas were captured. Some of them were put into the Dili Comarca prison, others are in the regional military hands or in the hands of the Red Berets (Indonesian elite units). Among those who disappeared is Cecilia Ximenes, who was captured in Lospalos with a weapon at the beginning of last year. After being tortured for a long time, it has been said that she "disappeared' in the regional military command. Chico Belo who was captured in Venilale in the middle of last year, "disappeared" in the regional military command of Baucau. Domingos fell into the hands of the ennemy in Ainaro on December 24,1985 and he just "disappeared".

On February 6,7 and 8, Indonesian forces encircled the stony mountain range of Matebia with the help of the air force with the intention of capturing Fretlin-leader Xanana who at that time was at that place. On the first day of the attack 9 dead Indonesian soldiers arrived at the cemetery of Dili. On the second and on the third day of the attack 8 dead Indonesian soldiers arrived at that cemetery. We do not know how many were buried in Baucau and how many were transported directly to Java on a Hercules- C 130 transport plane. On our side there were no casualties. Daily there is no lack of dead bodies for the (Indonesian military) cemetery in Dili. A new cemetery was built between Baucau and Uailili and is also almost full. The central hospital "Dr. Carvalho" is overflowing with wounded and mutilated Indonesian soldiers.

The Indonesian soldiers are demoralized and fed up with the war. Many Indonesians officers are already conscious of the fact that Indonesia is unable to dominate the situation militarily and politically. Some Indonesian say: "We are just awaiting the order for withdrawal. Indonesia cannot row against the tide of this world". Two commanders of battalions were called to Denpasar (Bali-military command headquarters) just a few days ago because their men had refused to advance in battle. Many of them are participating in various ways, actively and effectively in our struggle. This is a truth. That is why they try to arm the sons of East Timor to have them fight against their own brothers.

In the villages and concentration camps the East Timorese people continue to offer passive resistance, collaborating actively with the armed resistance under all circumstances. The ennemy himself knows that this is how things are. The East Timorese people are conscious of the necessity to participate in the struggle in order

to free our country of the Indonesian colonial rule and to end once and for all the suffering imposed by the occupier. Today many of those who occupy important positions in the present society and who had asked for integration with Indonesia have become conscious of the fact that the struggle carried out by Fretilin is just and at the same time they participate in various aspects of the struggle.

As a consequence of the passive and effective resistance of the East Timorese people, the ennemy retaliates with persecution, torture, imprisonments and summary executions. During the last year the ennemy carried out executions in East Timor. We shall mention a few cases that we know of directly:

(1) On October 19,1985 three young men were killed in Kelikai by battalion No. 724: Juliao, 18 years of age, Tadeu Ximenes, 17 years of age, and Victor Ximenes. They were killed at a place called Sula Nau.

In Laga 10 people were killed, among them was Tomas who had recently arrived from the Atauro island prison.

Another man who had recently arrived from the Atauro prison island was killed in Baguia.

(2) In Venilale three boys were killed who were guarding their cattle. Still more recently a local chief and his son were killed when they returned from their gardens which are about 3 kilometres away from the village. The Indonesian guards did not bother to look at their passes (i.e. a document necessary for any movement out of the villages) which were presented to them. In a few seconds two lives ceased to exist. How many of these cases exist throughout East Timor! On January 31, 1986 many people were imprisoned in Kelicai and Laga. After two weeks of torture 8 of them were brought to the central prison in Dili, the others were told to go home. The names of the 8 people are: Luis Maria, Felix Ximenes, David Ximenes, Justino and Manuel (Kelicai of the Abafala village) Cristovao Ximenes and Carlos (Laga of the Atelari village) - one name is missing.

(3) In the middle of 1985 many people were imprisoned in Soibada together with the local chief. The Indonesians searched the residence of Father Mateus. The imprisoned people were beaten, whipped, burnt with cigarettes, etc. . The local chief and Jose Vong were brought to the comando of the Red Berets in Dili. Father Mateus intervened at high levels of the civil and military administration in Dili and the case reached the office of Benni Murdani (Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces). He ordered some of his officers to carry out an investigation of the case. The local chief and the other man were sent back home.

In the prisons and concentration camps

The resistance of the East Timorese people leads to imprisonments, exile and the disappearance of the best sons of East Timor of all ages, of both sexes and of different social backgrounds. Until the middle of September 1985 there were 177 political prisoners in the Comarca prison in Dili (Bekora and Kaikoli), some of them had been tried and others not. 43 other political prisoners were sent to Jakarta's central prison Cipinnang. The number of prisoners in the regional military commands (Koramil and Kodim), in the hands of the Red Berets, in the central military commands is unknown. On December 24, 1985 B. Murdani freed 15 military men and police men from the Caicoli Comarca Prison, all of them were reintegrated into the service. We are certain that there are hundreds of East Timorese political prisoners who have been brought to various Indonesian islands,their whereabout is unknown. Many of them were said to have disappeared in the years 1979, 1980 and mainly 1983.

At the present moment there are about 937 prisoners in the concentration camp on Atauro. 936 of them are from Viqueque and 1 is from Lospalos. They have been separated from their families for over 5 years. During the last year the prisoners from the Manatuto and Same districts have been freed.

On June 28, 1985 a total of 32 people, men women and one child, were sent to the Caicoli prison. One of them,called Jeremias Meneses died on November 19 after being tortured.

In the Purgoa concentration camp in Cailaco are those prisoners from the areas of Baucau, Viqueque and Lospalos who had been sent away from Atauro. Their condition in this camp are a little bit better, but they are not allowed to go home.

Prisoners from various parts of the country have been concentrated in Aileu. After a recent visit there by the wives of the Governor and the Military Commander things have become a little better there.

In the prisons of Dotik on the other coast, of Hailikou and Maliana things are as before.

In the interior of the country, in many villages and concentration camps the people have no living conditions to help them survive as a people. If you, for example, go through the villages of Luro, Laivai, Tutuala, Iliomar, Uatolari, Cajularan, Lacluta, etc. you will see that the people live in a state of permanent encirclement. They are not allowed to leave their villages beyond 3 kilometres. Besides they always have to have a "pass" issued by the Indonesian military authorities. It happens easily that East Timorese are accused of having contacts to the guerillas, then they are immediately the victims of torture, massacres, etc.. The people live in huts but at night they are forced to sleep in ditches inside and outside of the hut. The people live in constant tension of fear . The Javanese, however, filled with fear, hide themselves. The militia control the night. In Uatolari the Indonesians set up barbed wire around the center of the village. At 5 o'clock in the afternoon the whole population has to be in this fenced off area. This way it is evident that the people continue to be severely hit by hunger. Their

gardens and plantations were abandonned. They live like cattle at gun point.

Journalists and other international observers have said that the East Timorese situation regarding food and education has become better, but that's a short-sighted vision of the global situation in East Timor. And why ? The reason is simple. First because all foreigners who arrive here are being led by members of the Indonesian military secret police. The foreigners only obtain information that is convenient for the Indonesian authorities. Second, the Indonesians only allow visits to places that are convenient for them.

The people continue to die of hunger, of torture and of massacres. We never may distort the truth. A lot of starvation is foreseeable for the current year because the little corn that has been planted has been destroyed by heavy winds.

Health situation. As soon as you leave Dili you will find a truthfully sad situation: The lack of medicine. If it exists at all, it is extremely rare. The people have no money to buy it. But only people who have rupias are being treated. In fact the rupia is the basis for everything. For everything you have to pay a "uang roko" (money for cigaretts): For a simple signature under a pass or for a signature under a document asking for admission to the civil service - you always have to pay a bribe.

In every little village and hamlet agents of the state family planning program (keluarga berencana) are present in order to make people limit their number of children and each family is only allowed to have three children. In the interior the military forces our women to receive injections and "pills" are being distributed to them for the same effect. All the women are forced to take part in this. It is one way the ennemy has to make our ethnic identity disappear.

Education: Intentionally the ennemy tries to kill our culture, alienating our children and men of tomorrow according to previously planned objectives.

Dili is the biggest center in terms of population and it is also a source of corruption and alienation. The insecurity of their lives, as well as hunger and sickness, justify the gathering of people in the capital, which now numbers about 80.000 inhabitants including the Indonesians who have come to live there.

The town is large enough to give a certain security to all those who for political reasons are being persecuted in the mountains. The impossibility of earning a living on their land because of an encirclement that grows tighter and tighter makes that many others come to the town to earn their daily bread there, always in the hope of returning to their land one day. But nowadays living in the town becomes more and more difficult. (The writer continues to say that there are few jobs available to East Timorese and that most workers are being brought in from Indonesia).

The Catholic Church in East Timor continues to be the hope of the martyred people. In difficult times the Church has tried to ease the suffering and pain of our people materially, within its possibilities, and morally. Under difficult circumstances the Church has contributed immensely to our struggle for liberation. This is a fact the East Timorese people will not easily forget. The Church has saved more than a few lives. The Church identifies itself with the East Timorese people. That is why the Church also suffers with its people. How often were its ministers object of severe criticism and bad treatment on part of the occupier!

On February 1, 1986, a telegram sent from Ossu ordered the immediate imprisonment of Father Hilario Madeira, who at that moment was in the Eclesiastic Chamber. The case was brought to the Governor's office. However, the Church continues to walk at the side of its people, living the same sufferings and sharing the same hopes.